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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000386

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2017

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SUBJECT: BISCET, PULIDO SUFFER IN PRISON, AND OTHER ABUSES

REF: HAVANA 362

Classified By: COM Michael Parmly; Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Political Prisoners Wither Away: High-profile political prisoner Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet's wife, Elsa Morejon, visited USINT April 17 and described Biscet's deteriorated physical condition at Combinado del Este prison: Severe bucal sepsis; arterial hypertension; hypercolesterolemia; gastroduodenal ulcer; and osteoarthritis in the upper spinal column. Morejon released a document to international media with these and other details, including the maximum-security regime under which Biscet is held, even though his "crimes" were all non-violent. Earlier on April 17, Rebecca Rodriguez Souto spoke to Pol-Econ Counselor about the deteriorating health of her husband, political prisoner Alfredo Manuel Pulido Lopez, a dentist and independent journalist arrested in the Spring 2003 crackdown. According to Ms. Rodriguez Souto, he has severe bronchitis and other respiratory ailments that are life-threatening. Prison paramedics, she added, are aware of the severity of his condition, but have no authority to get him the medical care he requires.

¶2. (SBU) Journalist Arrested/Sentenced: Media April 18 reported the arrest and summary sentencing of Oscar Sanchez Madan, an independent journalist from Matanzas. Sanchez Madan, according to media accounts, has a four-year prison sentence for the crime of "dangerousness." He is well and favorably known to USINT, and had filed reports regularly on human rights violations and economic backwardness/mismanagement in Matanzas province. Two dissident associates of Sanchez Madan visited Human Rights Assistant on April 16 and told her that State Security warned them "They will be next" in line for arrest on a "dangerousness" charge.

¶3. (SBU) Phoned Death Threat: On the evening of April 17, opposition leader Martha Beatriz Roque (MBR) called Pol-Econ Counselor and played back a taped phone conversation she had just had with a State-Security goon who warned her that "Bad things could happen to her," and that "She's putting her life in danger." MBR repeated to the caller her understanding that this was a death threat, and told him she would replay the call on Radio Marti. MBR the following evening told us that Portuguese (RTP) TV reporter Sandra Felgueiras and her cameraman, Bruno de Jesus, were detained on their way to interviewing her.

¶4. (C) Comment: These incidents reinforce the main theme of our report last week (Reftel), that there is no let-up in

repression from the Castro-led regime, regardless of whether it is Fidel or Raul Castro calling the shots. The threat to MBR is very likely the first regime reaction to the democratic opposition's "Unity for Liberty" document, released over this past weekend.

PARMLY